

Remarks

A. Claims in the Case

Claims 1 and 2 are pending in the case. Claims 1 and 2 are rejected. Claim 1 has been amended.

B. The Claims Are Not Anticipated by Rudy, Jr. et al. Pursuant to 35 USC §102(b)

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,684,187 to Rudy, Jr. et al. (hereinafter "Rudy"). Applicant respectfully disagrees with the rejection.

The standard for "anticipation" is one of fairly strict identity. To anticipate a claim of a patent, a single prior source must contain all the claimed essential elements. *Hybritech, Inc. v. Monoclonal Antibodies, Inc.*, 802 F.2d 1367, 231 U.S.P.Q.81, 91 (Fed.Cir. 1986); *In re Donahue*, 766 F.2d 531, 226 U.S.P.Q. 619, 621 (Fed.Cir. 1985). A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987).

Amended claim 1 states:

A connector for electrical conductors comprising contact/locking end-fittings on the ends of the connector to be connected, the connector comprising:

a connector body or case;

electrically insulated locking members retained inside the connector body or case and designed to receive the contact/locking end-fittings;

two insulating elements which are joined by snap-fastening tabs, the locking members being placed between the two insulating elements; and

a single retention and insulation element for retaining the locking members inside the body or case and electrically insulating the locking members, the retention and insulation element being produced as a single part, made of an elastomer, by overmoulding of the locking members directly in the body so as to surround the locking members on the side facing the case and at least on the rear side of the connector and having openings on the rear side of the connector for insertion of the end-fittings and for sealed passage of the conductors fitted with the end-fittings.

Support for the amendments is found in Applicant's specification, which states in part:

The connector according to the invention, as illustrated in FIG. 2, includes a body or case 1 corresponding approximately to the body or case 1 of the connector of FIG. 1. Moreover, on the connector according to the invention, there are the same locking members 2 placed between insulating elements 3 and 4, which here are joined together by snap-fastening tabs 13, formed for example as projections on element 3 in order to cooperate with element 4.

The retention of the assembly comprising elements 3 and 4 including the locking members 2 in case 1 and the sealing of the entire connector are provided by a single element 14 that surrounds the module, formed by elements 3 and 4 including the locking members 2, at the same time, on the rear side, on the front side, and on the side facing case 1. Here element 14 forms, on the rear side, a sealing part 15 with through-holes 16 for the end-fittings designed to be inserted into locking members 2 with part 15 being in this regard similar to element 7 in FIG. 1, on the front side, part 17 having through-holes 18 and nipples 19, similar in this regard to element 10 in FIG. 1, and the outer perimeter relative to the body or case 1, thus providing not only retention of the module inside case 1, without any other means, but also perfect sealing. The sealing obtained in this manner is much better than that obtained according to FIG. 1 which includes several sealing elements fastened together.

(Specification, page 4, lines 8-25).

Applicant submits that Rudy does not appear to teach or suggest the features of the claims including, but not limited to, the features of: "two insulating elements which are joined by snap-fastening tabs, the locking members being placed between the two insulating elements" and "a single retention and insulation element for retaining the locking members inside the body or case and electrically insulating the locking members, the retention and insulation element being produced as a single part, made of an elastomer, by overmoulding of the locking members directly in the body."

Rudy appears to teach or suggest a connector assembly having an elastomeric material overmolded around a retention wafer. Retention tines are used to retain the connector assembly within a housing. The assembly includes a locking member, a single retention, and an insulation element which is included in the elastomeric material overmolded on the locking member. The assembly of Rudy does not appear to be provided with two insulating elements joined by snap-fastening tabs such that the locking members are placed between the two insulating elements.

Rudy states:

Fig. 4 shows assembly 40 with elastomeric material 38 overmolded around retention wafer 10, and holes 42 extend from reward end 46 to forward end 54, through holes 16 of wafer 10.
(Rudy, column 4, lines 38-41).

Each large cavity 62 of housings 60, 160 has sidewalls 6 having recesses 68 therein whereinto retention tines 14 extending from sides of assembly 40 will be disposed upon insertion. During insertion of assembly 40 into housing 60, tines 14 are urged inwardly by sidewalls 66 of large cavity 62 and slide along sidewalls 66 until assembly 40 is fully seated in large cavity 62. Then tines 14 assisted by spring force of adjacent elastomeric material 38, are urged outwardly into recesses 68. An end of each tine 14 engages a forwardly-facing wall 70 of each recess 68 which together act as cooperating stop surfaces. Elastomeric material 38 along the inside surface of each tine 14 gives spring-like support to urge tine 14 outward, while allowing tines 14 to be flexed inwardly during insertion of assembly 40 into large cavity 62 of housing 60. It can be seen that large retention tines 14 allow retention assembly 40 to be self-retaining within housing 60, although adhesive material could be used to assure retention. Ledge 44 of assembly 40 engages rear surface 72 of housing 60, and can be seen to be dimensioned larger than large cavity 62 whereas assembly 40 generally is just slightly smaller than or possibly equal to the inside dimensions of large cavity 62.

(Rudy, column 5, lines 14-35).

For at least the reasons cited above, Applicant submits that the combination of the features of the claims including, but not limited to, the features of: "two insulating elements which are joined by snap-fastening tabs, the locking members being placed between the two insulating elements" and "the retention and insulation element being produced as a single part,

made of an elastomer, by overmoulding of the locking members directly in the body" are not taught or suggested by Rudy.

As such, Applicant submits that claims 1 and 2 are patentable over Rudy.

C. The Claims Are Not Anticipated by Lucien Pursuant to 35 USC §102(b)

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by French Patent No. 2 742 264 to Lucien. (hereinafter "Lucien"). Applicant respectfully disagrees with the rejection.

Applicant submits that Lucien does not appear to teach or suggest the features of the claim including but not limited to, the feature of "two insulating elements which are joined by snap-fastening tabs, the locking members being placed between the two insulating elements." As such, Applicant submits that claims 1 and 2 are patentable over Lucien.

D. Summary

Based on the above, favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Vantouroux, P.
10/634,128

If any extension of time is required, Applicant hereby requests the appropriate extension of time. If any fees have been omitted or if any additional fees are required or have been overpaid, please appropriately charge or credit those fees to Meyertons, Hood, Kivlin, Kowert & Goetzel Deposit Account No. 50-1505/5310-05100/EBM.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric B. Meyertons
Reg. No. 34,876

Attorney for Applicant

MEYERTONS, HOOD, KIVLIN, KOWERT & GOETZEL, P.C.
P.O. BOX 398
AUSTIN, TX 78767-0398
(512) 853-8800 (voice)
(512) 853-8801 (facsimile)

Date: Sept. 13, 2005